The Horses of Achilles, C.P. Cavafy

Translated by Daniel Mendelson

When they saw Patroclus had been killed,
he who'd been so brave, and strong, and young,
the horses of Achilles began to weep:
their immortal nature was indignant
at this work of death, which it now beheld.
They'd shake their heads and toss their flowing manes,
and with their feet they'd stamp the ground and grieve
for Patroclus who they knew was lifeless—undone—
shabby flesh by now—his spirit vanished—

left without defenses—without breath—
returned from life unto the great Nothing.

Zeus beheld the tears of the immortal
horses and grieved. "At Peleus's marriage,"
he said, "I should never have committed such great folly.
Better never to have given you away, my
unhappy horses! What business have you down here
with wretched humanity, the plaything of fate.
You, for whom neither death nor old age lie in wait,
are oppressed by passing misfortunes. Men have snared you
in their afflictions."—And yet their tears,

for the everlasting calamity

of death, the noble creatures kept on shedding.